

BOOK REVIEW

MARIANNA APPEL KUNOW. 2003. **Maya Medicine: Traditional Healing in the Yucatan.** (ISBN 0-8263-2864-4, hbk.). University of New Mexico Press, 1601 Randolph Rd SE, Suite 200S, Albuquerque, NM 87106, U.S.A. (Orders: www.unmpress.com/Ordering.html, 1-800-249-7737). \$29.95, 152 pp., tables, b/w figures, appendices, glossary, index, 6" × 9".

Marianna Appel Kunow wrote her new book, *Maya Medicine*, in a refreshingly conversational and easy to read style. It was the culmination of her graduate research into healing plants and the people of the Yucatan that use them. The text presents information about the author's field plant collection and also showcases the lives and practices of the healers with whom she worked.

Some of the studies into the Yucatan healers include discussions of how they became curers; some were trained through "dreams," while others learned from family members or extended education in addition to traditional western training. The author shares some information about the healer's family as well. Additional information includes the types of medicine practiced by the curers—medicinal plants, massage, ceremonial rituals and midwifery. Kunow also includes a chapter to discuss the common techniques used for treatment such as prayer, plant medicine, massage, plant magic, crystals, dream interpretation, and western medicine.

One of the more informative discussions is on the perceived causes of various diseases. Kunow introduces the concept of hot and cold types of conditions and various "magical" diseases such as the evil eye. Common ailments such as colds and skin complaints are also covered. Various plants used for these treatments are listed in table form.

With respect to the actually layout of the book, approximately half of it focuses on Kunow's plant lists, illustrations and field notes. The author created multiple tables to relate both scientific and common names to two previous texts on ethno-botany: Roy's 1931 *Ethno-Botany of the Maya* and the *Book of Chilam Balam of Kaua* (Bricker). Common names in the various tables are given and compared in Spanish, Mayan and Kaua. The comparison tables are followed by black and white illustrations of thirty-six of the plants discussed as well as the valuable plant catalog of names and field notes for plant species collected. Other useful items such as a list of plant names by family, glossary of terms and index are also included.

In her book *Mayan Medicine*, author Marianna Appel Kunow shares her personal experience of working with various curers in the Yucatan during her graduate research. There are two foci for the content of this book: the healers and the plants they use. The author spends half of the book describing the healers' backgrounds, preferred practices, techniques and personalities. The remaining half is primarily tabular information about the names and uses of the plants collected and discussed during research activities by the author. The conversational style makes the text easy enough for most high school students and beyond to read and enjoy. Anyone with an interest in ethno-botany or traditional healing will likely enjoy reading *Mayan Medicine*—Lee Luckeydoo, *Herbarium, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.*